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ABSTRACT

Due to the rapid expansion of knowledge and the school's increasing responsibilities, the educational job has been substantially modified. Thus, the school staff, like individuals in every walk of life, are finding it necessary to continuously increase their levels of competence. Professional performance requires that each educational practitioner be engaged in a program designed for his continuous professional improvement. Assuring the continued professional development of its staff must become as much a part of the school's operation as providing instruction for the children. This bulletin consists of: (1) a brief description of such current administrative concerns as broadened educational goals, curriculum change and development, shortage of qualified personnel, school district reorganization and consolidation; (2) identification of some general characteristics of past programs; (3) a brief review of highlights of such different approaches as teacher institutes, teacher reading circles, higher educations' involvement, and increased supervisory assistance; and (4) a brief discussion of some guides for developing programs. (NQ)

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

AN EMERGING FUNCTION FOR SCHOOLS

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT—AN EMERGING FUNCTION

"The central fact of our age is the explosion of human knowledge.—We must realize that we are not dealing with mere change but with totally new dimensions."
—Franklin D. Murphy, Chancellor, University of Kansas

There is no hiding place from the forces which turn today into yesterday and make past preparations for tomorrow of little use. From the level of national government to the smallest enterprise of our cities or towns, careful thought is being given to programs and techniques for the retraining and upgrading of individuals performing many different kinds of tasks. The machinist in the machine shop with twenty or more years of experience finds he must continually learn to operate new and more complicated machines. The farmer as he plants and harvests his crops must engage in programs to increase his knowledge of soil, seed and pesticides. Practicing physicians with years of experience are participating in seminars, short courses and demonstrations. The butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker can no longer depend day after day upon the knowledge of their trades picked up through apprenticeships or past experience on the job. Individuals in every walk of life are finding it necessary to engage in activities which are self-renewing.

Those who staff our schools are prominently among those having need to increase their levels of competence. Rapid expansion of knowledge as the content for instruction with approaches which make application of technological innovation have substantially modified the educational job. Added to these changes has been the tendency for schools to accept ever increasing responsibilities—including part of the needed training and retraining of others. Like the machinist, farmer or physician, teachers and school administrators find themselves with a task having totally new dimensions, a task for which their background of preparation and experience becomes increasingly inadequate. Continued professional performance requires that every educational practitioner be engaged in a program designed for his continuous professional improvement.

It is no longer sufficient for schools and school systems to limit their efforts to mere acknowledgement of the importance of the pro-

fessional development of their staff. Neither is the tradition of leaving responsibility to individual professionals on a voluntary, on-your-own-time and at-your-own-expense basis. Encouragement and incentives are not enough. The educational needs and complexities of today do not permit leaving this area to chance. Responsibility must be assumed by schools themselves. Assuring the continued professional development of its staff must become as directly a part of school operation as the function of providing instruction for children. It is to this emerging responsibility that this bulletin is directed.

HIGHLIGHTS OF PAST EXPERIENCE

It is not assumed that staff development—or inservice professional improvement—is something entirely new for public education. The first teacher who entered the first classroom must have had some concern about his effectiveness as a teacher. Through some kind of rudimentary evaluation he must have tried to do something about any deficiencies he detected. He may have searched through professional literature as a means for self-improvement. He may have discussed his own ideas for improving his performance with others.

Whatever the earliest beginnings, our relatively brief history of public education reflects varied approaches to inservice programs aimed at improving teacher competence. Growth of these programs has not been uniform. Their initiation and continued growth reflect the same pattern of hills, valleys and plateaus which are characteristic to other educational developments. A detailed description and analysis of the different approaches which have been tried is not possible here, but a brief review of certain highlights might include suggestions which could benefit programs of the future.

Teacher Institutes

One of the earliest and most popular systematized approaches to giving assistance to teachers was development of what became commonly known as teacher institutes. Written reports of the men who sat in superintendents' chairs as much as a century ago point up their genuine concern about the adequacy of their teaching staffs. Because public education in that period consisted almost entirely of elementary education, many of those who became teachers had little more prepa-

ration for their jobs than having completed the program of the elementary school. It was in this environment that teacher institutes emerged.

Most institutes were organized to include all teachers on a county-wide or district-wide basis in order to give the superintendent of schools or some individual selected by him an opportunity to hold classes, teaching not only methodology but subject matter as well. The institute was usually a one-day affair held just prior to or soon after the opening of school. Gradually over the years as more of those who entered teaching had completed high school and perhaps even some normal or college training, there developed a tendency to headline each institute program with some outside "big name" speaker. To such inspiration and dedication to the task as hopefully would derive from the major speaker, the emphasis on techniques of teaching and classroom management was continued as a major ingredient of the institute.

Teacher Reading Circles

Somewhat less widely developed as a device for helping individual teachers improve their professional understanding and competence were what most commonly became known as teacher reading circles. In some areas the circle organized was an outgrowth of the local teacher institute. The basic approach of the circle was that of encouraging teachers in a regular and organized way to read selected pedagogical materials and subject matter books, assuming that through such reading they would enhance their teaching capabilities. To the more sophisticated treatises on educational theory and practice were added in many circle programs the specific "how-to-do-it" materials increasingly available from publishing houses. Because these materials had a direct and immediate classroom application, they were by far the most popular and most used items among those circulated.

While it would be difficult to determine how much actual impact these organized reading circles had on classroom practice, the approach did make educational literature and materials accessible to many teachers who might otherwise have been unaware of their existence.

Higher Education's Involvement

As states increased their minimum standards for the initial licensing and continued certification of teachers, the common measure developed to determine the adequacy of applicants was the number of college hours completed at a normal training institution, teachers college, or other college or university. In most states these requirements were later refined to consider only those college hours considered to contribute directly to professional practice in teaching. The impact of these licensing programs has been such that most teachers in America today have completed at least a bachelor's degree. Current pressures indicate that the day is not far off when an even higher level of preparation will generally be required.

The increased emphasis placed on college credit and years of college completed tended somewhat to minimize the value of the more informal local programs and made necessary direct involvement of higher education institutions—not only in programs designed for those preparing themselves for teaching but also for the upgrading of teachers already on the job. The summer school became a major device for making opportunity for additional college preparation available for those having teaching assignments during the regular academic year. The specialized and intensive summer institutes are a much more recent development. Similar to the regular summer school in organization is the contemporary proliferation of extension courses, evening-hour classes and correspondence study—all readily available techniques for making college and university study accessible to school staff members.

There is little doubt that these efforts by higher education institutions have been a great boon to the staffs of public school systems. At the present time, they make up a major share of all staff development activities.

Increased Supervisory Assistance

Most forward looking organizations, educational and otherwise, look upon supervisory activities as a major means for the improvement of staff performance. At one time supervision in schools was more appropriately inspection. Gradually, however, and now almost universally, it has taken on giving assistance to teachers and general

staff development as its most important functions. Locally organized workshops for self-sudy and self-evaluation or for curriculum study and revision have become regular activities in many school systems. Second only to the special courses taught either on or off college campuses, workshops and evaluation techniques account for a major share of the time presently put into inservice improvement programs.

Because local efforts in the area of inservice education vary so widely, it is not surprising that there are differences of opinion regarding their effectiveness and worth. Ratings range from excellent and very good to mediocre and poor, undoubtedly depending upon the nature of the activity, its leadership, the extent of participation and the purposes for which it was designed. It may be sufficient here merely to point out that for a number of years the various accrediting associations and agencies, both state-sponsored and regionally organized, have encouraged staff development through introspective evaluation studies. Increasingly more and more schools are undertaking such action.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PAST PROGRAMS

Any thumbnail tracing of nearly a century of organized staff development efforts in American public education jumps boldly over variations and refinements without acknowledgment of their existence. Even so limited, the brief review of the several major approaches may be sufficient to permit identification of certain general characteristics of this historical development:

- *Most past programs have been on a hit-or-miss basis.* Educational leadership has seemed to blow both hot and cold on the matter of conserving the human resources available to them. In spite of general acceptance of the premise that learning is a continuous process, most past attempts to provide inservice development activities for school staff members have been spotty and disjointed. Some programs have been hardly worthy of the time and energy expended. Some have been limited completely to a single week or even a single day with virtually no attempt to relate activities to the day-by-day teaching job of individual staff members. Some

of the better programs which were developed were permitted to deteriorate and ultimately were abandoned. It is not so much that leadership has been unaware of the values which might come from a carefully planned and continuing program aimed at increasing the capabilities of those engaged in teaching as a failure to recognize staff development as anything other than an emergency measure.

- *Developing in situations of critical need, past programs illustrate a panic button philosophy.* The rapid rise of teacher institutes a century ago came about because educational leaders recognized the emergency situation facing them. It was a time when public education was emerging as a potent force in American society and, as indicated by superintendents' reports of that day, the concern was that most teachers had little more than a grammar school education themselves. The same "panic button" philosophy was applied in the attempts which followed World War II to resolve the shortage of qualified personnel by making "teachers" from college graduates regardless of their field of study. The special institutes in such fields as science, mathematics, foreign language and pupil guidance follow this familiar pattern.

- *Past programs have been paced by the poorest.* It has long been recognized that the best teachers in a school system gain the most from any inservice program. They tend to have the greatest capacity for professional growth. Yet, most organized programs for staff development in the past have been geared to those with least ability. Almost universally staff development programs have been devoted to remedial pursuits rather than developmental concepts.

- *Responsibility for staff development has been transient.* While school administrators on a local basis originally assumed almost complete responsibility for finding ways to improve the abilities of their staff, there has been a gradual but substantial shifting of this function to others. Increased levels of preservice preparation and state adoption of higher academic requirements for the licensing of teachers and other specialized school staff members has brought an increased

dependence on the capacity of colleges and universities to establish courses and preparation programs. As the general body of knowledge has continued to expand and newer approaches to teaching have been refined, the easy way out has been a continued leaving of responsibility for an adequate supply of competent individuals to staff our schools to higher education institutions.

- *Past staff development programs have been mass approaches.* The important recognition given to the individuality of each pupil in the regular school program has seldom been transferred to inservice improvement programs for the professional staff. Past approaches have not generally included any built-in concern for the ambitions, drives and level of personal development of each individual staff member. Lacking such an individual focus, they have more often than not missed their target completely.

CURRENT DEMANDS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In the past two decades school administration has become an extremely complex process. It includes considerably more than merely providing buildings, materials and equipment, employing the personnel needed to staff classrooms, securing the funds these basic elements require and adding such lubrication here and there as will assure smooth operation. A brief description of certain current administrative concerns demonstrates the inherent insistence on giving high priority to staff development.

Broadened Educational Goals

The purposes of public education in America have been in continuous change and expansion since the first child entered the first school door. From a narrow concept of teaching little more than the skills of reading and writing or of high schools having as their only purpose the preparation of boys and girls for college, society has broadened its expectations until today there are high schools of a comprehensive nature and elementary schools in which the skill

subjects are primarily tools for other enrichments. Our schools now serve types of children who only a few years ago were quickly encouraged to withdraw if indeed they were included in the school program at all.

This wide range of abilities and disabilities which characterize today's school children requires an educational program that is multi-purposed and multi-directional. Its success depends upon a school staff thoroughly understanding of each individual student and skillful in meeting the specific and divergent learning needs he has. The traditional practice of providing a common educational fare for an entire class with some hope and belief that relatively uniform benefits and achievement will result can no longer be justified. Eliminating such practice is another matter, however. It requires a substantial reorientation of many of those now engaged in providing instruction and developing in them competence and confidence in newer approaches. Only carefully planned and deliberate professional development programs are likely to accomplish this.

Curriculum Change and Development

More sweeping changes in the curricular experiences our schools provide are being made at present than during any other period in the history of American public education. Some of the changes reflect current efforts to more appropriately provide for the different interests and abilities of the children now enrolled in schools. Some result directly from new knowledge and expanding content. Others stem from the development of new techniques, materials and approaches.

These forces imposing pressure for curriculum change should be understood because they suggest purpose and direction for many kinds of appropriate local adaptation. These might well include different patterns of grouping or regrouping of children, different ways of using the special talents of individual teachers, the use of electronic equipment in certain aspects of the instructional process, a vertical shifting of subject matter, or something else. Whatever specific revisions may be decided upon, implementation depends squarely on the individuals who make up the instructional staff. Change and improvement will depend upon their enthusiasm and dedication, their willingness to modify familiar patterns of operation and try something new and different. Providing the experiences

that make it possible for a staff to adjust to change is a staff development function. It is an essential part of keeping the curriculum up to date.

Shortage of Qualified Personnel

Entirely aside from the purposes of education and curriculum change is the hard reality that there simply is not an adequate supply of well qualified teachers and specialists to staff our schools. Education is in the same situation as other employers who compete for the limited number of people having both a high level of preparation and competence. The dilemma is magnified because the increasing complexity of school operation and the teaching process has brought a necessary raising of professional preparation requirements, because the schools have undertaken additional services and need personnel for positions which previously did not exist, and because the population explosion has brought a doubling and redoubling of school enrollment in many communities. The number of new positions created seems continuously to outrun our ability to prepare qualified people to fill them.

Schools have been struggling with the short supply of teachers and other educational specialists since the beginning of World War II. Among the expediences employed to meet it have been calling a number of former teachers back into service and a variety of attempts to qualify individuals with less than adequate professional preparation. A substantial portion of those called upon to help fill classrooms have "provisional," "conditional," or "emergency" credentials. Some individuals previously considered unemployable due to their lack of preparation are presently meeting a class each morning with chalk and eraser in hand. The task facing our schools, therefore, is not only finding qualified individuals to fill the vacancies which occur on the staff and the new positions created, but also improving the capabilities of those who have been pressed into service without adequate professional qualifications.

School District Reorganization and Consolidation

From a system of relatively small schools and small school districts, education has moved rapidly—even if reluctantly in some

communities—into a pattern of larger districts and consolidated schools. The organizational framework within which schools operate has experienced greater change than all other aspects of government combined. While the earliest efforts of reorganization were almost exclusively confined to rural areas, it now involves a number of cities and much of what we regard as suburbs as well.

The benefits of larger districts and consolidated schools in terms of achieving educational goals and providing broader and enriched opportunities are increasingly documented and the evidence points clearly to continued efforts in this direction. At the same time, school administrators have become aware that reorganization and consolidation creates problems which seldom existed in schools having only a small staff. The task of coordinating the instructional program and other school activities is almost always greater as the size of the school district is increased. Communication becomes both more formalized and more difficult as a larger number of people are brought together.

While these factors apply in any large school system, they have a certain uniqueness for the district newly reorganized or the school newly consolidated. The staff of the new district generally includes most of those who were employed in the smaller schools before consolidation. Some have a great deal of difficulty adjusting to the new circumstance and in relating themselves to the larger school and its larger staff. Many are not the least enchanted with the major change which has taken place. It is apparent, then, that developing the "new staff" into a smoothly working and effective team is an important responsibility for the leadership of every newly reorganized district.

GUIDES FOR DEVELOPING PROGRAMS

Educators, along with their friends and colleagues in business, industry and the other professions, must recognize that the future success of their operation will depend upon giving major attention to the development and improvement of the personnel already employed in their organization. There seems little hope that a sufficient supply of highly skilled and outstandingly qualified people will come along to fill all of their new demands or even permit replacement of those now on their staff who fail to measure up to the level of com-

petence desired. Further, the best conceived preservice preparation program that is possible cannot provide all the experiences necessary to equip an individual for thirty or ten or even as many as five years of acceptable performance in any field of specialized work. A continuing refinement of knowledge, skills and techniques while on the job will be absolutely essential.

While schools have not been completely lacking in efforts to provide for the professional improvement of their staff, neither have they fully accepted responsibility for this function. The brief review of past approaches to inservice staff development points out the absence of either a long-range view or philosophical commitment. More broadly conceived programs accessible to all school districts throughout America will be absolutely essential. Programs which achieve what will be needed will undoubtedly share some of the following general characteristics.

Developmental More Than Remedial

Basic to any staff development program is a fundamental belief in the capacity of all individuals for growth and improvement. An integral part of the program design, therefore, should be the identification and elimination of such individual deficiencies or shortcomings as staff members may have. But since no two members of any staff have exactly the same strengths or weaknesses, providing remedial help is primarily a task requiring an individual-by-individual approach. Mass approaches in staff development are no more appropriate than is a curriculum designed for a mass of students. On an individual basis, then—through demonstration, observation, discussion, or other appropriate technique—supervisors and instructional specialists should provide the specialized remedial assistance that is needed.

Far more important than just plugging gaps and converting individual weaknesses into strengths are activities of a staff development program which help the total staff keep pace with change. The staff continuously confronts the changing purposes of our public school system, a changing curriculum and the changing needs of society. It has been somewhat paradoxical in the past that educators, working in an environment of rapid and constant change, have often been

reluctant to accept the need for change in their own performance. Staff development programs should have moving beyond the status-quo level of operation as their major goal. They should be designed to keep the staff fully abreast of the changing local, national and international environment in which the school operates.

Systematic and Continuous

Programs of staff development must be systematically planned and carefully organized for continuous operation. Haphazard, on-and-off practices accomplish very little. The day is forever past when any staff member can be excused from engaging in efforts which increase his effectiveness, broaden his fields of knowledge and extend his horizons of interest. To assume otherwise condemns large portions of the school program to stagnation and mediocrity. Opportunities which foster this kind of broadening are not readily accessible to members of the school staff in most communities and must, therefore, be planned for, arranged and provided.

The real key to an effective staff development program is an even and steady emergence rather than a series of spurts, jabs and dabs at doing the job. The program cannot be something pushed hard in August or September and forgotten before January. It must be sustained. This requires a level of systematic planning and coordination that does not take place automatically. It comes only when responsibility for development of the program is firmly fixed and accepted, when the resources needed are brought together and made available, and when all fences which would impose limits on the opportunities for individual professional growth of staff members are removed.

Accessible to the Total Staff

All members of the staff should be involved in staff development activities. Past programs not only have been spotty in organization and the amount of time devoted to them but in the kinds of staff members who have participated as well. Some have been geared only to those having a low level of preparation or competence. Most reflect a general belief that only the teachers who staff the schools'

classrooms have been in need of inservice improvement. Only occasionally have school systems attempted to develop programs for upgrading the competencies of supervisors, principals and other specialized service personnel. Involvement of the administrative staff has been generally limited to the regular weekly or monthly principals' meetings. These sessions more often than not have emphasized the routine housekeeping functions of administration rather than providing opportunities for professional development.

Because the largest number of people on any school staff are the teachers who work directly with instruction, it can be expected that activities designed to help this group keep pace with change will constitute a major share of any staff development program. A comprehensive program will not be limited to the teaching corps, however. It is probable, in fact, that activities involving the administrative and supervisory staff will have more far reaching effects on the total educational program of the school district than any other phase of the staff development program. This same broad-gauged impact might be expected from developmental activities involving the superintendent of schools. The superintendent must continuously expand his knowledge and understanding and sharpen his specialized abilities and skills if he would provide the leadership for which he is responsible, if he would set the pace for staff development in the school system.

Cooperatively Planned and Developed

Not only is it important that every member of the school staff be included in the activities of the staff development program, they should also be participants one way or another in planning what is to be done. A successful program is one that the entire staff develops. There has been no hint in this discussion that a program designed to help keep a staff up to date is easy. Emphasis has been only on the necessity for such dedication. There is no magic. Achieving the ends desired is not possible without tremendous staff effort. It is emphasized, therefore, that a staff development program will be successful only where individual staff members are consulted and have opportunity to actively participate in planning the activities in which they will be involved. Plans implemented by administrative dictate have little chance to make much difference.

There are a number of plus values which make the task described seem entirely possible. The entire focus of staff development, for example, is one of continuing intellectual development. Assuming responsibility for such an assignment should certainly not be frightening to those engaged in the educational process. In addition, the staff of every school system is made up of professionals. They are proud of the service they give. Very often it has been a staff, as they have worked cooperatively in attempts to solve mutual problems, who have identified areas in which their own capabilities have needed strengthening and development. All want to excel. All are deeply concerned about their own self-improvement. Thus, the motivation for a well conceived staff development program already exists. Capitalizing on this desire, recognizing the important human resources the staff represents, and cooperatively planning ways in which each member can advance his own special areas of competence constitute the challenge staff development holds for the school systems of tomorrow.

THE EMERGING FUNCTION

The emerging concept of staff development differs from older versions in its emphasis on school system responsibility. This means that school systems must do more than just make plans for and talk about it. They must diligently undertake its organization and implementation. They must provide for it in their budgets. They must employ such staff as will be needed to provide the leadership and coordination it requires. They must accept it in every way as an important, legitimate and urgent function.